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People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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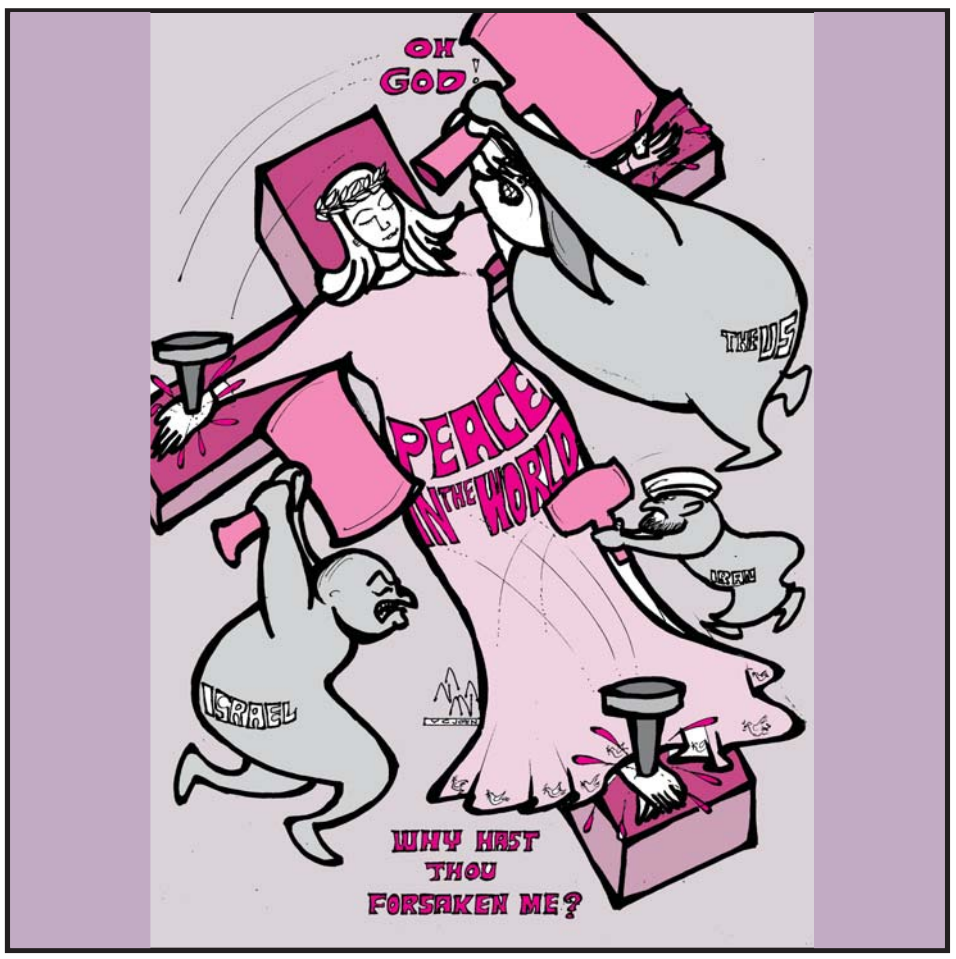

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

Access to justice for women A key to peace and reconciliation

Lutheran World Federation (LWF) delegates at the UN Commission on the Status of Women highlighted the need for justice in war and post-conflict countries.

From Gaza to The Gambia, from Colombia to Ukraine, Lutheran churches and faith-based organizations are on the frontline of the struggle to bring justice for women and girls in war or post-conflict countries. At an event hosted by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) during the 70th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), gender justice advocates shared stories of working to bring peace and justice in these very challenging contexts.

In the opening message, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Anne Burghardt reminded participants that "even in the midst of devastation, women are leaders, peacebuilders and anchors of resilience in their communities." She reaffirmed that "there can be no sustainable peace without gender justice," adding that justice in conflict settings must be concrete. "It means survivor-centered protection and care. It means accountability for perpetrators. It means legal identity and access to services for displaced women and girls. It means full and meaningful participation of women in peace processes and reconstruction efforts," she said.

Golda Ibarra, LWF Representative for Colombia and Venezuela, spoke about her experience of leading gender justice and peacebuilding initiatives in border regions of Colombia, including Arauca and Choco, where Afro-Colombian and indigenous women in particular face multiple risks of

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Access to justice for women:
A key to peace and
reconciliation

CIDSE Together for global justice · HEKS EPER Bread for all · Oikoumene World Council of Churches · Caritas Africa · Caritas Mona · actalliance eu · caritas europa · misereor GEMEINSAM GLOBAL GERECHT · european christian environmental network · Broederlijk Delen TOT IEDEREEN MEE IS · CCJP · CELAM · SECAM · Brot für die Welt

Protect farmers' seed rights

The World Council of Churches (WCC) joined 13 faith-based and development organisations in pressing European Union negotiators to safeguard farmers' rights to seeds as trialogue negotiations on the EU Plant Reproductive Material Regulation enter a decisive phase. A joint letter submitted on 11 March called on EU officials to ensure the reform strengthens - rather than erodes - global food security and biodiversity.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, WCC general secretary, said, "This letter aligns directly with WCC's position on food systems and with the core mission of justice, stewardship of creation, and solidarity with the marginalised. The letter advocates for the preservation of biodiversity and the protection of local ecosystems against industrial (agro) monocultures. WCC views access to food not just as a commodity issue, but as a human right. By supporting the 'Right to Food' and the rights of peasants (as enshrined in UNDROP), the WCC upholds the biblical mandate to protect the vulnerable against systems that favour powerful commercial interests over human wellbeing."

Dr. Dinesh Suna, WCC programme executive for Land, Water, and Food, framed the WCC's commitment in terms of solidarity: He said, "As a global fellowship, many member churches of WCC are in the Global South, where peasant seed systems are the backbone of food security. WCC leadership signing this letter is an act of solidarity with these farming communities, protecting them from any harmful EU regulations."

Jean Felix Delice helped set up a local development organisation for farmers in the mountains of Léogane, Haiti. *Photo:* Sean Hawkey/Life on Earth Pictures

The coalition's four demands are concrete: allow farmers to exchange all plant reproductive material freely, without regional limits or monetary penalties; open registration pathways for traditional and locally developed varieties across all crop types; exempt small "nano-enterprises" from the heavy administrative requirements of Articles 41–42; and require transparency over breeding techniques and intellectual property rights to prevent the misappropriation of traditional seed knowledge.

On behalf of the signatories - ACT Alliance EU, BD, Brot für die Welt, Caritas Europa, Caritas Africa, Caritas Mona, CCJP Harare, CELAM, CIDSE, ECEN, HEKS/EPER, Misereor, SECAM, WCC, a coalition of faith based and development organisations working with partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America - we would like to share with you our fundamental concern in view of the ongoing trilogue negoSaSons on the PRM RegulaSon. As organisaSons engaged in human rights issues, development cooperaSon and humanitarian work, we are parScularly concerned about the impact of EU seed legislaSon on farmers' human rights, global food security and biodiversity, both within and beyond the EU.

Our recommendations are based on our commitment and conviction that farmers' right to seeds is a cornerstone of the human rights to food, as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights (ICECSR) and developed both in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), and in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People living in rural areas (UNDROP).

Recommendations

1. Guarantee farmers' rights to seeds

2. Increase EU action to tackle the global biodiversity loss to guarantee food security

3. Diversification of seed markets

4. Provide transparency and participative governance structure

– WCC News

People's Reporter
A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

Outright thuggery and the silence of the Nations!

In the ancient times, kings used to wage war mainly for the plunder of wealth. Different from this, most of the wars in the recent past, were waged purportedly for ideological or religious reasons, for liberating people from despotic rulers or for pre-empting an imminent attack. All wars on the pretentions referred to above, were, in fact, aimed at imperialist expansion through controlling resources and markets.

As against the previous ones, the all-out war launched jointly by the US and Israel against Iran on 28 February by killing the country's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is aimed solely at thuggery. This is not at all a "pre-emptive war" as Israel has claimed. There is no evidence that Iran was preparing to launch an attack on Israel. On the contrary, Tehran was involved in serious negotiations with Washington under Omani mediation. On 27 February, Oman's Foreign Minister announced that a deal was within reach , based on Iran's commitment not to build a bomb or stockpile nuclear materials. It is hours after this hopeful statement by the mediator, American and Israeli missiles struck Iran and killed its Head of State and top leaders. In June 2025, while Iran was negotiating with the US, Israel launched a unilateral attack on that country triggering the 12-day war. Regime change in the targeted country was the declared aim of this war. However, stiff resistance by the Iranian forces shows that the joint forces cannot achieve this goal as the US could achieve in Iraq, Libya, and Syria in the recent past.

The war has inflicted unprecedented losses in terms of human lives, infrastructure and property both in Iran and Israel. The attacks by Iran on the military bases of the US in West Asian countries have created big havoc not only in these countries but also on millions of immigrants there, and on their families across the world. The naval blockade in the strait of Hormuz by Iran that caused steep rise in the price of oil and non-availability of cooking gas, has already inflicted hardship in the life of people across the world. The impending global financial crisis raises severe threat to the life of all people. President Trump who realised that it would be difficult to defeat Iran has appealed to European leaders for their collaboration, and the entire world fear that this war may turn into World War lll with the involvement of nuclear powers and wipe out humans from the earth, and cause collapse of all pyramids of civilisation.

It is hardly a month after the capture of the President of Venezuela as a prisoner and bringing the oil wealth of that country under its control, that the US, along with Israel, launched the war against Iran. It is a public secret that the real aim of this was is to plunder the oil wealth of Iran through regime change. This is a war launched to eliminate an adversary and reshape the region to suit American and Israeli interests. Such a war that violates all international laws has to be condemned by all countries. What is more unfortunate is that due to fear, almost all countries, except a few, refuse to condemn this war. The emergence of a culture of silence when all international laws are violated and civilians are killed indiscriminately, is a severe blow on human civilisation.

Thought for the Fortnight

When the law ends,
tyranny begins.

– William Pitt

The Earth Languishes: *Isaiah 24: 4-6* And the Ecology of War

Aravind Jeyakumar Moniraj

The ecological language of Isaiah 24:4–6 highlights the profound interconnectedness between humanity and the natural world, portraying the suffering of the earth as the result of human greed, violence, and disregard for divine instruction.

Contemporary conflicts such as the war between Russia and Ukraine, and tensions involving Israel, the United States, and Iran cause not only humanitarian suffering but also severe environmental damage, disrupting ecosystems, contaminating resources, and threatening biodiversity.

In the ongoing conflict following the Russian invasion of Ukraine significant environmental damage has occurred: **Warfare, fires, and explosions have generated about 230 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. Explosives release heavy metals and toxic chemicals.** Around 30% of Ukraine's land is contaminated with mines and unexploded ordnance, making agriculture dangerous. Shelling of industrial facilities has caused chemical leaks into rivers and water systems. **More than 2.4 million hectares of forests have been damaged, destroying protected ecosystems and wildlife habitats.** In addition, the recent conflict and military strikes between Israel and Iran, particularly attacks on energy infrastructure, have serious ecological implications: Bombings of oil facilities generate large fires that release toxic smoke containing soot, sulphur compounds, and heavy metals, harming human health and ecosystems. **Smoke from burning oil interacts with atmospheric chemicals, producing acid rain that damages crops, soil, and water systems.** Oil spills and chemical residues pollute ground-water and agricultural land, allowing toxic particles to enter the food chain. Attacks on oil and industrial infrastructure threaten marine ecosystems, fisheries, and fragile desert environments in the Middle East.

Conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, and tensions between Israel and Iran, intensify global environmental crises. Military emissions worsen climate change, attacks on energy infrastructure increase pollution, the Ukraine war disrupts global grain supply, and landmines and toxic waste cause long-term ecological damage. Hence, such issues cannot be simply ignored, however needs to

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addressed as how the prophets addressed during the biblical times. **The text of the Book of Isaiah 24:4–6 contains powerful ecological imagery depicting the earth mourning and withering because of human wrongdoing. This prophetic vision can be related to the ecological consequences of modern warfare, which produces severe environmental destruction and disruption. The following discussion attempts to relate Isaiah 24:4–6 to contemporary geopolitical tensions that generate significant ecological crises. Book of Isaiah 24:4–6 belongs to Isaiah 24–27, often called the "Isaiah Apocalypse," which presents a universal vision of judgment and restoration affecting the whole earth. Unlike earlier sections focused on Israel and Judah, these chapters address all nations and creation.** Many scholars connect this unit with the turbulent political context of the late monarchic period, including the decline of empires such as the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The passage links social injustice, political oppression, and moral corruption with ecological consequences, portraying the earth mourning and withering due to human wrongdoing.

In Book of Isaiah 24:4, the phrase "the earth mourns and withers" employs significant Hebrew terms that convey ecological and theological meaning. The verb ***'aval*** ("to mourn" or "lament") is commonly associated with grief, death, or disaster. Its use personifies the earth as grieving, suggesting that ecological destruction reflects not only physical damage but also cosmic suffering. The term ***naval*** ("to wither," "decay," or "fade") indicates the loss of vitality in vegetation and the broader decline of human and moral life, implying progressive ecological deterioration. Thus, the imagery portrays the earth as a living entity affected by human misconduct. The verse further states that "the world languishes and withers," using the Hebrew term ***'amal***, meaning "to become weak" or "lose strength," indicating the diminishing fertility and vitality of the earth.

Verse 5 states "the earth lies polluted under its inhabitants," the Hebrew word ***henaf*** is used which means to pollute, corrupt morally or to profane, and here in this context, it is referring to the moral corruption of humankind which has contaminated the land. In other words, it suggests that human actions have polluted and corrupted the land. In addition, this condition is there because "the inhabitants have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant." The phrase ***'averu torot*** ("they have transgressed laws") signifies the violation of divine instructions or the crossing of established boundaries, implying a disruption of the moral and natural order instituted by God. The text further states that humanity has "broken the everlasting covenant," indicating the breach of a permanent covenantal relationship not only with God but also with the earth and all living creatures. Within the prophetic worldview, the earth is not a passive object but an active participant in this covenantal relationship. Consequently, when humans violate divine laws and covenantal obligations, the entire creation experiences the consequences, leading to ecological disorder and crisis. As a climactic statement, Book of Isaiah 24:6 declares: "Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore, the inhabitants of the earth dwindled, and few people are left." The covenantal curse is presented as the consequence of violating divine law rather than arbitrary

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A Biblical And Theological Search

God, Word, World and Power

M. J. Joseph

[Third and concluding part of the paper 'God, Word, World and Power (A Biblical And Theological Search)']

According to contemporary science, nature is dynamic and purposeful. This helps us to perceive the power of the Word in creation not as "it" but as "thou". Such a perception is a call to live by the demand of God's Word in order to serve all of God's creation in a unified and holistic manner. All the religious scriptures of the world regard nature as the truest manifestation of the power of the Ultimate.

In search of an Eco-vision

The emerging ecological man of the 21st century is an integral to a holistic reality-the human, the natural and the divine constituting a cosmotheandric communion (Raimundo Panikkar).

In Rom.1.20 we find nature as a the symbol of the divine: Word in our midst with many versons. According to contemporary science, nature is dynamic and purposeful. This helps us to perceive the power of the Word in creation not as "it" but as "thou". Such a perception is a call to live by the demand of God's Word in order to serve all of God's creation in a unified and holistic manner. All the religious scriptures of the world regard nature as the truest manifestation of the power of the Ultimate.

As ecology today is a matter of faith, we find a wider canvas in nature for drawing pictures of social amity and integration. Who can deny the fact that humans belong to the Earth and the Earth does not belong to them. The Psalmist has affirmed long ago, **"the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Ps.24.1)".** The integrity of Creation as upheld in all the Sacred writings is not religious optional, but common asset for living purposefully in the world.

As nature is integral to the well-being of all, *the ecological sensibility found in all the sacred Scriptures be regarded as many versions of the One Word*. The very understanding of ecological sensibility in the Asian Religions leads us *to a theo-centric consciousness as the panacea for the social and political ills of today.* Ecological sensibility is an attitude of universal brotherhood ingrained in human hearts through the wonder of creation. It is mixed with feeling and reason. It goes beyond the way of life defined by tradition or scripture. A religious approach to discover its spirituality with an open mind makes the vertical and the horizontal relationship joyous. In its triangular relationship - God and nature, man and nature, God, man and nature, there is an intense search for unity. In the sacred writings of the religions of Asia, particularly of India, there are points of convergence at various plains. All the living beings from the smallest to the homosapiens co-exist in a state of symbiosis fulfilling God's plan and the purpose for which they are created. Adam and Eve, the first man and woman lived in close relationship with every living creature: the birds of the air and the beasts of the field in an environment of natural beauty and splendor unspoiled by ecological degradation. The biblical testimony is that creation is a single hymn of praise in which humans, animals and nature participate.

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In God's continuing act of creation, humans are called upon to maintain the integrity of creation at its best with love and compassion. The meaning of Divine governance in nature should be regarded as another version of the One Word.

●

The Earth Languishes: *Isaiah 24: 4-6* And the Ecology of War

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punishment. The verb **'akal** ("to eat" or "devour") metaphorically depicts the curse consuming the earth, symbolizing widespread devastation. This perspective reflects a broader theme within prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible, where social injustice, violence, and exploitation are closely linked with environmental destruction. **The ecological language of Isaiah 24:4–6 highlights the profound interconnectedness between humanity and the natural world, portraying the suffering of the earth as the result of human greed, violence, and disregard for divine instruction.**

In the present geopolitical context, recent military strikes involving Israel and the United States against targets in Tehran, Iran, have reportedly targeted oil depots and energy infrastructure, causing large fires and releasing substantial pollutants into the atmosphere. Burning fuel depots produced dense clouds of toxic smoke containing hydrocarbons, sulphur compounds, and heavy metals, posing risks to human health and ecosystems. These fires also contributed to what has been described as "black rain," in which polluted particles from smoke mix with rainfall and return to the ground, potentially contaminating soil, water, and food systems. Reports indicated that the air in Tehran became nearly "unbreathable," while environmental agencies warned that toxic smoke and acid rain could produce long-term health and ecological consequences.

Book of Isaiah 24:4–6 provides a prophetic lens for understanding environmental crises caused by war. Violence and injustice cause the earth to suffer. Ecological damage linked to tensions between Israel and Iran reflects this warning and calls for justice, peace, and responsible stewardship of creation.

●

Of 'Epic Fury', merchants of death and Minab's lament

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knows only the void. Does any state have the right to snuff out the sacred spark that is a human life?

The profiteers of Golgotha

While the mothers of the East weep, the stock tickers of the merchants of death in the West climb. This war has become a "great harvest" for them. The global arms industry has turned the blood-soaked soil of West Asia into a showroom for high-yield destruction.

In 2026, the US defence market value has surged past $350 billion, fueled by emergency replenishments. Armament giants like Lockheed Martin, RTX, and BAE Systems have seen their stock prices climb significantly—with some analysts tracking sector-wide gains of 10% to 40% since the coordinated strikes of 28th February ignited the regional firestorm.

***"For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?" (Matthew 16:26).* We are witnessing the construction of cathedrals of profit atop mass graves. As long as a missile launch is viewed as a "buy" signal on the stock markets, the sirens of war will never truly fall silent.**

A global contagion of poverty

The shockwaves from the desert have reached the ends of the earth. For India, this is a tragedy felt in every home. But the contagion is global. From the rice fields of the Philippines to the working-class suburbs of Chicago, New York and Paris, the poor are paying for a war they never voted for. With the Strait of Hormuz effectively closed, President Donald Trump has called upon the United Kingdom, China, France, Japan, and South Korea to dispatch their own warships to "take care of that passage". **This demand for a multi-national naval coalition signals a dangerous new era of global militarisation.**

Meanwhile, Brent crude oil futures, which stood at $60.75 a barrel when the war began, spiked to a session high of $119.50 — a nearly 100% surge — before settling near $100 late in the week ending 14th March. This is the reason a family in London can'tafford heating and a mother in Manila cannot afford foodgrains. The fire in our kitchens goes out as cooking gas is rationed because of a conflict raging in distant capitals.

The prophetic voice of the church

In this hour of darkness, the church cannot hide behind the walls of the sanctuary. Our voice must be a trumpet blast for the voiceless. Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in India, has rightly identified this conflict as a crisis of our collective humanity. Whether it is a migrant in Abu Dhabi, a child in Gaza, or a struggling worker in the West, they are all *"the least of these" (Matthew 25:40)*.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of India and other ecumenical partners should stand united. We must reject the "neo-conservative" obsession with perpetual enemies. We must remind the world of the Psalmist's truth: *"Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7).*

A call for a just peace

To boast of "decimated infrastructure" is a hollow victory if it leaves a billion souls radicalised by hunger and grief. We do not need a "quick war" or a "surgical strike". We need a "just peace". The ongoing "Operation Epic Fury" is an affront to the God of Life.

The international community must cease being a silent audience to a genocide. There must be an immediate demand for an end to this bloodshed before the fire consumes us all.

Let us pray and work for the day when nations *"shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks" (Isaiah 2:4*). True victory is not found in the silence of the grave, but in the courage to speak for the living.

●

Climate Justice and Biodiversity - 1

The Weaver Ant And the Wisdom of Biodiversity

Mathew Koshy Punnackadu

The World Council of Churches (WCC), in its Decade of Climate Justice Action (2025–2035), has chosen *Climate and Biodiversity* as the focus for 2026. This theme calls the global church to reflect deeply on the relationship between climate change and the loss of biodiversity — and to rediscover what the Bible teaches about the sacred web of life.

What does Scripture say about biodiversity? What is the role of the Church in preserving it? This article begins a series exploring biodiversity through biblical reflections and lived ecological wisdom.

The Painful Bite of the Weaver Ant

The weaver ant is a small but fierce creature. When it bites, the pain is sharp and unforgettable. One may instinctively ask: *Why did God create such a creature?*

Yet when we look more closely, we discover that this tiny being is not an enemy. It is a friend of farmers, a protector of trees, and a participant in God's intricate ecological harmony.

Village farmers have long allowed weaver ants to spread across mango, cashew, citrus, and coconut trees. These ants aggressively defend the trees by attacking harmful pests**. Modern ecological research confirms what traditional wisdom already understood: weaver ants are among the most effective natural pest managers in tropical agriculture.**

What appears painful is, in fact, protective.

1. Creation Teaches Us — Even Through the Smallest Creatures

The book of Job declares:

"Ask the animals, and they will teach you;

the birds of the air, and they will tell you" (Job 12:7–10).

The Bible affirms that creation itself is a teacher. Divine wisdom is revealed not only in mountains and oceans, but also in insects and soil organisms.

Biodiversity — the wide variety of life forms — is not accidental. In Genesis 1, God repeatedly creates "according to their kinds" (Genesis 1:11–25), affirming diversity as part of divine intention. The Creator delights in multiplicity.

The weaver ant becomes a living commentary on Scripture: even the smallest life-form participates in God's sustaining design.

2. Every Creature Has Intrinsic Value

Psalm 104 offers one of the most beautiful hymns to biodiversity in the Bible:

"O Lord, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all.

The earth is full of your creatures". (Psalm 104:24).

This psalm does not present creation as existing merely for human utility. It celebrates creatures — wild animals, birds, sea life — as beings sustained and loved by God.

The weaver ant exists not by accident but by divine wisdom. Its bite may hurt humans, but its ecological role protects plant life and strengthens agricultural systems. This challenges an anthropocentric worldview. Creation is not centred solely on human comfort; every creature possesses intrinsic worth.

The Apostle Paul deepens this vision:

"In him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17).

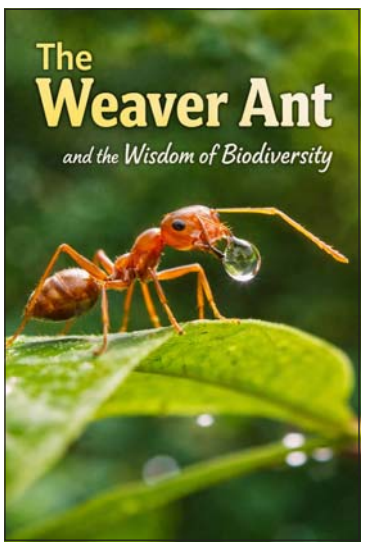
"All things" include forests, insects, rivers, and climate systems. Biodiversity reflects the cosmic Christ in whom the entire web of life finds coherence.

3. Mutual Custodianship: A Biblical Vision of Interdependence

The weaver ant protects plants; plants provide habitat; humans receive nourishment. This is a circle of interdependence — what we may call *mutual custodianship*.

Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackadu is presently the Commissioner, Climate Justice and Sustainable Development of the World Council of Churches. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackadu is the Project Director of the CSI Community Development Programme.

Genesis 2:15 describes humanity placed in the garden "to till it and keep it." The Hebrew verbs imply care, protection, and service — not domination. Humanity is called into sacred partnership with the rest of creation.



When we honour biodiversity, we participate in God's ongoing creativity. When we destroy habitats, pollute ecosystems, and destabilize the climate, we disrupt the delicate relationships that sustain life.

The painful bite of the ant may even serve as a prophetic reminder: creation resists exploitation.

4. Wisdom from the Ant

The book of Proverbs advises:

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise" (Proverbs 6:6).

The ant teaches cooperation, vigilance, and communal responsibility. Weaver ants function collectively; they protect their ecosystem with remarkable dedication.

In a time of biodiversity loss — when species extinction is accelerating due to climate change, deforestation, and unsustainable development — the Church must also rediscover this collective wisdom. Climate justice is not an individual project but a communal calling.

5. Biodiversity, Climate, and the Mission of the Church

Climate change and biodiversity loss are deeply interconnected. Rising temperatures, altered rainfall patterns, and habitat destruction are pushing countless species toward extinction. The loss of even the smallest species can destabilise entire ecosystems.

Romans 8:22 reminds us: *"We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now."*

The groaning of creation today is audible in melting glaciers, burning forests, drying rivers, and vanishing species. The Church cannot remain indifferent.

The Role of the Church in Preserving Biodiversity

1. Theological Reorientation

The Church must proclaim that biodiversity is part of God's good creation (Genesis 1:31). Every species has value beyond economic usefulness.

2. Liturgical Renewal

Worship should celebrate the diversity of creation, echoing Psalm 148, where all creatures are invited to praise the Lord.

3. Ecological Education

Sunday schools, seminaries, and theological institutions must integrate biodiversity and climate justice into teaching.

4. Practical Action

Churches can promote tree planting with native species, protect local water bodies, avoid harmful pesticides, encourage organic farming, and support conservation efforts.

5. Advocacy for Justice

Biodiversity loss disproportionately affects vulnerable communities. Climate justice demands solidarity with those who suffer first and most.

Seeing God's Wonder in All Creation

The next time we feel the sting of a weaver ant, we may pause and reflect: God's creation is full of mystery. What seems inconvenient may serve a larger ecological good.

The Bible presents a vision of creation where every creature participates in divine praise, divine purpose, and divine interconnectedness. Biodiversity is not merely a scientific concept; it is a theological affirmation of God's manifold wisdom.

As the WCC calls the global Church to reflect on *Climate Justice and Biodiversity*, may we rediscover our vocation — not as rulers over creation, but as humble participants in God's living, interconnected world.

In Christ, who holds all things together, may we work for a future where biodiversity flourishes, climates are restored, and creation sings once again in harmony.

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The Role of Science in Protecting the Creation in God's Way

Solomon Victus

Introduction:

For all Abrahamic religious believers, especially Christians, God is considered the centre of creation, and therefore God is often called the Creator, in the Bible. So let us consider religious people, especially Christians, and their understanding of the universe here.

As we find in every religion, there are two major types of believers, and this is true even among Christian believers: rational believers and sightless believers. Almost all theological seminaries and Bible colleges in India and their perspectives and emphases have come under one of these two categories: liberal or fundamental. The theological seminaries, in general, tend to have liberal ways of understanding creation, whereas the Bible colleges take fundamental approaches. There may be exceptions here and there, yet exceptions are not examples. In the case of the creation stories in the Bible, the rational believers, in general, understand that God is the manifestation of the infinite system of science. They also believe that God created the entire universe including all planets and gave the responsibility to humans to maintain the global order in tune with nature.

The Creation belongs to everyone, whether they believe in God or not. For non-believers, especially Atheists, Agnostics, Evolutionists and Rationalists, there is no such thing as a one-time creation of this universe, and they believe strongly that there was a natural evolution which took place since time immemorial, from a simple to a complex universal system. Some of them have been even discussing about the multiverse over against the universe. For them, nature is something that has become the centre of everything, and they have understood that this nature is a suitable entity for human habitat, and want to make the universe, especially the earth, a perfect place for the survival of humans and other creatures. In this process, they reject faith in violence, killing and destroying people, and they prefer peaceful coexistence and transition towards a transformed world.

The human vocation is to be a gardener of God's earth, to till the land and make it productive, to cultivate nature and culture. Note the word 'tend': the word signifies, for example, the relationship of a mother to her child. In this case, we, the children, are to treat 'mother earth' with the same tenderness.

The pertinent question remains among believers how much space can be given to a scientific approach to religion. If we furnish more room for rationalism in the religions through a scientific approach then it becomes scientific or left-wing or progressive Christian thinking. In fact, this sort of progressive thinking ultimately affirms democracy, plurality of opinion, secularism, inter-faith relations, transparency, etc. If we are able to give a lesser role to rationalism in the religions, it becomes right-wing or unprogressive thinking, affirming unshakeable faith in oral traditions, conservatism, fundamentalism, communalism, etc.

Plurality of Creation in the Bible: **Christian believers also need to understand that the Bible also accepts that there are pluralities of understanding of creation.** Bishop Sam Amirtham, a biblical scholar, admits that 'There is not one account or tradition of creation in the Bible, but at least four. The earliest is Gen. 2:5 to 3:24 (J); the second is Gen. 1:1 to 2:4 (P); the third is the Wisdom tradition Ps. 8, 24, 104; Job cha. 38-40; and fourth is the prophetic tradition Is. 35, 65, 17-25 etc. **It is almost like the four Gospels of the New Creation in the New Testament.' He elaborates it in the following manner.**

The Rev. Dr. Solomon Victus is a former Professor of Social Analysis at Tamilnadu Theological Seminary at Madurai, Tamil Nadu

i) The earliest account tells us that God created a garden, made man giving the breath of life, and put him in the garden 'to till and care for it'. The human vocation is to be a gardener of God's earth, to till the land and make it productive, to cultivate nature and culture. **Note the word 'tend': the word signifies, for example, the relationship of a mother to her child. In this case, we the children are to treat 'mother earth' with the same tenderness.**

ii) The second account tells us that God is the author, owner and controller of this universe and of all creation including humankind; the dignity of human beings is that we are made in the image of God. This points to God's creativity and God's capacity to love all God's creation.

iii) The Wisdom literature, the Psalms and the poetical books of the Bible praise God for His creation. While we are created 'less than angels', according to Ps.8:5, in another sense we are 'more than angels', for the angels are not made in the image of God. **The crowning of humankind with God's image and glory is great news to be proclaimed.**

iv) The prophetic tradition emphasises that God is continuing to recreate the heaven and earth, and is bringing nature and history to the fulfillment of God's purpose. **According to Peter we have this promise, and look forward to new heavens and a new earth, the home of justice (2 Peter 3:13).**[1]

However, the Jewish stories of the Bible cling on to the idea that God found that the creation was 'good', and that God gave the earth to the humans as well as to all living creatures. God gave to humans the responsibility of naming animals as well as 'tilling and keeping' the earth. Unlike Hinduism, the Old Testament references never claim exclusively that one of the dimensions of God is to destroy the earth; rather it understands that God permits disasters or catastrophes or calamities on earth due to human transgressions and violations as a lesson to be learned in order to change their ways.

At one point of time, the Jewish story says, particularly in the book of Genesis, God allowed the destruction of the earth by water because of utter human disobedience. In this perception there is nothing contradictory between faith and science.

It is quite natural that irresponsible human behaviour will bring natural disaster every now and then to the humans, whether you believe in God or not. However it is said in the Bible that God was the first person to feel sorry for that kind of repercussion (Gen. 8:21). ●

To be continued

In the next issue

Dichotomy in Understanding the Bible

Conversion

>>> Contd. from Page 6 Col. 5

lepers, anyone who was sick, poor, and marginalized. **God has never been a mere spectator or a distant sympathizer. Through many biblical narratives, we see God suffering along with people.** The suffering of the people of Israel in Egypt was not unknown to God. When God says, "I know their sorrow," it is not knowledge gained externally, but rather that God was with the people of Israel through their 400 years of slavery in Egypt. We see God becoming one among those who are persecuted in stories like that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Jesus Christ did not remain merely empathetic toward suffering people; He continues to remain a representative of suffering people even after His death and resurrection. In his life-changing encounter with Christ in Acts chapter 9, Paul asks, "Who are You, Lord?" Jesus answers, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." **Jesus was not a Lord who is a silent spectator, but One who has always become the persecuted. He was not merely the God of the persecuted; He is the God who is persecuted on behalf of others, and He still remains persecuted.**

We need to convert ourselves into an empathizing Church and stand for others, willing to bear the consequences. One day, that consequence will be freedom and equality.

While we happily identify people from other faiths as "non-Christians," we fail to recognize the non-human attitude within ourselves. In recent times in India, Christianity has remained silent, often a silent spectator of people's suffering. It is very absurd that, in spite of knowing who might be next, we are still able to find comfort and peace, remaining deaf to the cries around us. I believe our intense interest in **converting** "others" to our emotionless state might appear illogical to Christ, who is eternally bound up with all those who suffer. Have we not proven to be a "called-out" community that never comes out to the streets for others?

Our present way of expressing disagreement from behind closed doors will never bring change to the ongoing persecution in our nation. Rather, we need to convert ourselves into an empathizing Church and stand for others, willing to bear the consequences. One day, that consequence will be freedom and equality. ●

Young People's Column

Lent: A Journey with Divine Spirit

Nirmal Cherian

Lenten season calls us for a renewed mind. These days can be a time for search for identifying our role and responsibility in society. It is not an escape from reality, but a call to live in the midst of its challenges. Let us have a journey into the realities of life and equip ourselves with new vision and perspectives.

"And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him." (Mark 1:12,13, Nrsv)

We are in a Lenten season. Churches across the globe set apart these days with special prayers and meditations. These days call for spiritual upliftment, renewal, and reconciliation. Lent reminds us of the days of Jesus, particularly his journey in the wilderness. Jesus was guided by the spirit into the wilderness before he entered into the ministry. The days he spent in the wilderness remind us of a secluded place and a period in life. However, these days were a time of resistance and resilience. Wilderness events (Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13) became times of trials and temptations. **Lenten season calls us for a renewed mind. These days can be the time in search for, and to identify our role and responsibility in the society. It is not an escape from reality, but a call to live in the midst of its challenges. Let us have a journey into the realities of life and equip ourselves with a new vision and perspective.**

1. Journey for Peace

Jesus' ministry was in the context of Roman imperialism. His words and deeds became symbols of peace. Wilderness events were fights against internal and external dilemmas. The Tempter was ready to give authority over the world Kingdom to Jesus. However, Jesus rejected it. The World witnessed two World Wars in its search for power and authority. Today, the situation has reached its peak. The world is facing threats of war and violence. 'Eliminating my threat' has become the aim and a slogan for war and violence. Almost all nations spend a huge part of their budget provisions on the war machine, which includes big industries supplying war equipments. The persistent global conflicts of the twenty first century from the U.S.A. & Israel - Iran to Israel - Gaza to Russia - Ukraine expose deep ethical and theological challenges for Christians. Interplay of politics, faith and violence has become a source of serious debates. Wars have created the need for a deeper quest for the ethical justice of human innovations. One of the negative contributions of science and technology is the invention of deadly weapons for mass destruction. A war decides the supremacy of a nation against another nation. War is often considered as the last resort to end conflicts. However, war and violence can only bring bloodshed, pain and troubles. **The whole Christian message is one of love, peace and compassion. Jesus taught His followers to love their enemy (Matthew 5:39), live at peace (Romans 12:18) and reject retaliation (Mathew 5:39). Christian peace-making is not merely an activity; it is Church's identity. We are called to embody peace through prayer for enemies, care for the wounded, dismantling barriers and anticipating the fullness of God's new creation.** The Hebrew word "Shalom", the Greek word "Eirene"and the Arabic word "Salam" remind us the role of peace, trust and hope, that everyone is being taken care of. Claus Westermann says greeting

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peace is the basis of trust, and farewell words establish security. The understanding is that there should be peace that is given by God and we should uphold peace. The quest for power and violence is the reality of the time. But, let us move ahead, promoting peace and harmony.

2. Journey in Search of Truth

During Jesus' journey in the wilderness, the Tempter was often using the scripture to promote its wish. The authority of the Tempter over the world was even communicated (Matthew 4: 1-11). But still, was this exactly the truth? The challenge of identifying truth remains a serious threat. The post-modern context seriously faces the challenge of identifying truth. **In 1992, the magazine named *The Nation* proposed the idea of *post-truth* in an article titled *The Government of Lies*. This term got popularized in 2016, as it got selected as 'Word of the Year'.** In today's context, when publicities, advertisements and promotion-events reach their peak positions, truth often becomes challenging. Thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche opines that "truth" is often a construct shaped by power, language and perspective. The challenge is to think. **Are we influenced to believe subjectively?** Selective presentation of facts, strategic framing and repetition, can challenge credibility of information. Algorithmic operation of social media platform can restrict ourselves within emotionally engaged contents. Conspiracy theories are put forth without evidence. Curiosity becomes investment for new theories. **This reminds that, truth is not merely a tool for argument but a moral responsibility. Here, we are not passive receivers of information but active moral agents. Immanuel Kant argues that moral action is grounded in duty. When media often values rating beyond facts, society faces crisis of truth and injustice. This often creates division and discrimination. This calls us to stand for truth. Paul Tillich says, "Truth is that which concerns us ultimately."**

We always live in relational network; misinformation or manipulative narratives can damage communal trust. Moral responsibility calls us to remain vigilant against falsehood and willingness to stand for truth. **To speak truthfully, to act justly and to accept accountability are not merely personal virtues but are social necessities.**

3. Journey for Unity

The wilderness event in the life of Jesus was portrayed by Mark as an incident of sharing time with wild beasts. This reflects that even in loneliness, a person shares life with the cosmos. Every creature exists in mutual relationship.The Cosmic cycle exists in a chain of relationships. Theologians like Jurgen Moltmann and John D. Zizilous opine that the relationship is the true nature of creation because even the Creator exists in relationship. **Moltmann locates the Church as a movement within the Trinitarian history.** When this doctrine of Trinity is carried over to ecclesiology, the Church often calls for an inclusive vision. A society is diverse with different religions, cultures and languages. **We are called to celebrate the differences. We are called to stand for unity in diversity. Accepting the 'otherness' has become the immediate need of the hour. In Christian faith, we begin by affirming that every human being is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). As the society is getting more fragmented based on religion, caste, gender and even by denominationalism, let us strive to be bridges rather than walls, listeners rather than accusers, and peacemakers rather than partisans.**

As the Lenten days progress, let us introspect about our responses to the present day challenges in the society. It is a journey in search of truth, justice, love, and healing. It is also the time of gaining strength for responding with a "no" or "yes" at the ideal time. Let us pray and work restlessly for a world guided by peace, truth and unity for the mutual co-existence. ●

Conversion

Benedict I R

**Jesus was not a Lord who is a silent spectator,
but One who has always become the persecuted.
He was not merely the God of the persecuted;
He is the God who is persecuted on behalf of others, and He still remains persecuted.**

Mohammad Deepak, actually named Deepak Kumar, is a gym owner from Kotdwar, Uttarakhand, India, who went viral in January 2026 for defending a 70-year-old Muslim shopkeeper against a mob. He defiantly identified himself as "Mohammad Deepak" to promote unity and combat communalism.

On January 26, 2026, Bajrang Dal activists targeted a clothing shop, "Baba School Garments," owned by Vakil Ahmed, demanding a name change. Deepak Kumar, a local Hindu, intervened to protect the elderly shopkeeper, stating, "My name is Mohammad Deepak," to signify that humanity transcends religious identity. Following his action, Deepak faced significant backlash, with his gym membership dropping from 150 to nearly 15, and he reported threats. On the other hand, he also received support from various people, including prominent political figures like Rahul Gandhi.

Deepak Kumar, for a moment, converted himself from one religion to another, a religion called Humanity. While there are many debates going around concerning conversion, even becoming a

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primary political agenda of right-wing groups, we need to think about an essential and distinctive conversion that all of us have to go through. **We all might have preconceived notions about conversion, yet conversion is nothing but the process of changing something from one form to another in function, use, or belief systems.** We often think of 'conversion' as making someone else accept our belief and our way of thinking, but we need to convert ourselves from our present emotionless state to an empathetic state.

A striking form of conversion that we encounter in our Christian belief is God converting Godself into human form, the Incarnation of Jesus, the Creator becoming creation in order to be in communion with the suffering for their liberation. Jesus remained compassionate throughout His earthly ministry. Father James Keenan describes compassion as the "willingness to enter into the chaos of another person's life." Jesus did this with the centurion, the Samaritan woman, the adulterous woman, the woman with hemorrhage, the blind, the

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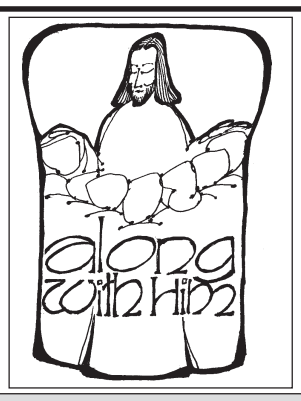


561

Mammen Varkey

Lenten Meditations - 2

Huge Stones and Humble Widows

"And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury…….And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living." Mark 12:41-44.

In the last reflection, Along With Him – 560, we shared that Jesus did want that all his disciples should not miss seeing the widow, offering her two copper coins! Also that we should not fail to listen to the Master's words about the poor widow's contribution.

Be not conformed to this world's thinking

Jesus wanted his disciples of all times to reject this world's way, the common way, of thinking. **We are called not to be conformed to the way of thinking and the 'standards' of this world.** *"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good, and acceptable, and perfect."* Romans 12:2 (RSV). Jesus wanted his disciples to have a new way of seeing and understanding, a new way of thinking and reasoning. In particular, even while teribly fighting for his life, Jesus wanted his disciples to train their eyes to see that inconsequential, utterly poor widow.

The chosen disciples so sadly failed!

After that incident, Jesus and his disciples came out of the temple. Then something terribly shocking happened! As they came out, **'one of his disciples** said to him'. Mark 13:1. **But it should be noted that in the Gospel According to Matthew, it is written, 'his disciples came to point out to him'. Matthew 24:1. Luke writes, 'Some of the disciples were talking about the temple'.** Luke 21:5. From these, we can conclude that **not just one disciple, but the disciples generally**, wanted their Master Jesus to look at the greatly imposing Jerusalem temple 'adorned with noble stones and offerings', and **to marvel at it**. Luke 21:5. **Jesus must have been terribly shocked! And very disappointed too!!** What the Master wanted inside the Temple, was that his disciples should, unfailingly, look for insignificant, mournful 'widows'. But in no time, his disciples' eyes, unhesitatingly, fell on 'huge stones' (Penguin translation) and 'beautiful' 'great buildings'! Mark 13:2. **The Master Jesus must have been terribly sad. In spite of all his efforts, the disciples saw only 'huge stones' and towering structures. And they, very sadly, failed in seeing the insignificant, wretched people sitting, lying down, wandering outside the temple. Jesus' response was most unanticipated. Quite shocking! It must have been with an element of fury too! Their Master, totally upsetting their calculations, responded. 'Not even one stone of the temple will be left upon another'!**

See the 'small'

It is an incident which has extreme contemporary significance. What do Jesus' disciples of today see and marvel at? On what do our eyes fall? On 'huge' stones and 'great' buildings? At a time in history, when the 'large', the 'beautiful', the 'imposing' rob undue importance and attention, and when the 'poor', the 'small', the 'unsucessful' are totally ignored, **this incident narrated in the Gospels, gives a message which all disciples of Jesus, of all times, should not fail to listen to, and follow.**

Unquestionably, Jesus' disciples are called, even in the midst of threats to their lives, to see the small, the insignificant, the widow, the destitute, the wretched. Are we willing? If only we are willing to listen to, and appropriate this call, we will be able to be true disciples and followers of the Master Jesus. ●

LAMP UNTO THE FEET, LIGHT UNTO THE PATH

Let There Be Brotherhood

A. V. Itty

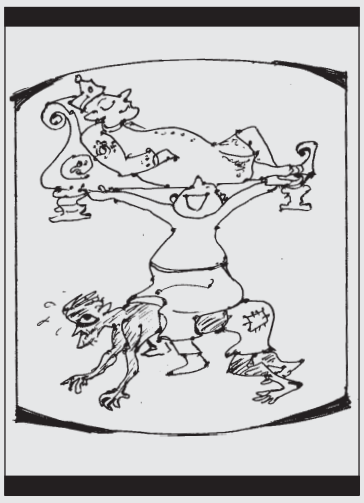
Jas. 2:1-7

"Suppose a rich man wearing a gold ring and fine clothes comes to your meeting, and a poor man in ragged clothes also comes. If you show more respect to the well- dressed man and say to him: Have this best seat here, but say to the poor man: Stand over there, or sit here on the floor by my feet; then you are guilty of creating distinctions among yourselves and of making judgement based on evil motives" (v.3, 4).

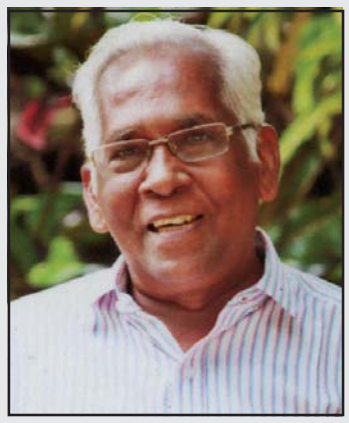
We are meditating upon a Scripture portion written by St. James, the apostle of righteousness, as an exhortation to the believers, in the backdrop of the distinctions based on wealth, that started developing in the early Church. James 5:1-6 is also very similar in nature.

The Apostle points out the sins of the rich and talks strictly about the need to eradicate such anti-Christian approaches from the Church fellowship. It will be interesting to imagine how sharp his criticism would have been, if he happened to view the situation now?

Strong Apostolic exhortation is seen here, not to differentiate believers on the basis of wealth, but to imbibe the spirit of brotherhood/sisterhood. To honour the rich and to neglect the poor is a tendency, that is as old as the humanity. The Church is a fellowship, which is expected to provide a foretaste of the fellowship of the Kingdom of God, where the culture of justice, brother/sister hood, equality, and sharing should prevail. It is not the culture of the world that should prevail in the Church. Rather, it is the alternative culture of love, brother/sister hood and equality that should dominate within the Church.



St. Paul says that Jesus Christ, rich as He was, He made Himself poor for your sake, in order to make you rich by means of His poverty (2 Cor. 8:9). Christians should imbibe the culture of Christ, and practise the model of brother/ sister hood as revealed by Christ. But, instead of being a crosssection of the Kingdom of God, the Churches and believers always try to be a cross-section of this world!



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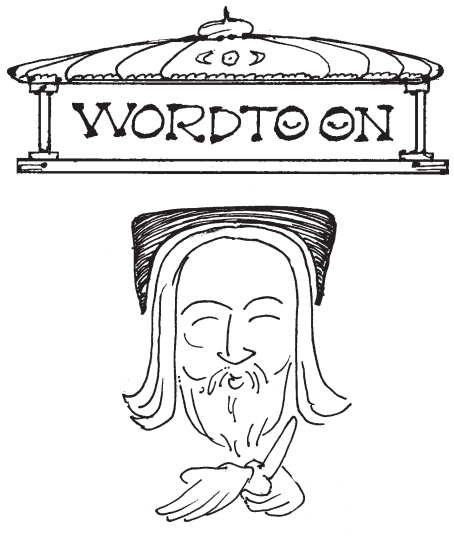
Then, we justify our behaviour with the reasoning that anything else is not possible while we are in this world. The exhortations of St. James which we meditate upon, should initiate repentance within us.

May God help us. ●



The LOVED ones say LOUDLY - 'The LORD is never a LOAD'

Food For Thought:

Where there is no righteousness, justice, and fraternity, Christianity dies!

Christian Conference of Asia

an organ and fellowship of churches and ecumenical councils in asia for initiating and facilitating dynamic christian witness and action

CCA calls for action to make justice accessible for all women and girls

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) marked International Women's Day 2026 with a statement released on 8 March, calling for renewed commitment to justice, accountability, and protection for women and girls across Asia.

Reflecting on this year's theme, "Rights. Justice. Action. For All Women and Girls," CCA General Secretary Dr Mathews George Chunakara emphasised that meaningful progress requires moving beyond commitments on paper towards real and enforceable change.

"Across Asia and beyond, women have never been closer to equality in principle, yet progress remains uneven and easily reversed. Despite legal protections on paper, weak enforcement, entrenched patriarchal norms, and systemic bias continue to undermine women's rights in many countries," said Dr. Chunakara.

The statement highlighted that women seeking justice often face deeply rooted barriers, including fear of retaliation, stigma, disbelief, and slow or costly legal processes. These challenges are often compounded for women experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination.

The CCA General Secretary stated, "It is only when commitments are translated into action that we can reach the goal of justice that women can access, navigate, and trust. Justice for women and girls means non-discrimination, gender equality, safety from harm, dignity in being heard and believed, meaningful remedies and support, and the prevention of further violence."

Dr. Chunakara called on CCA member churches and councils, and ecumenical partners across Asia, "to speak clearly and consistently against all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, ensuring that our Christian witness is embodied not only in words but also in action."

The statement further encouraged churches to listen to survivors with compassion, uphold their dignity, and accompany them in their pursuit of justice. It also emphasised the need for sustained advocacy to dismantle structural and social barriers that continue to limit women's access to justice.

Dr. Mathews George called for the full implementation of laws and for perpetrators to be held accountable without exception.

Concluding his statement Dr. Mathews George said, "May this world be one where communities uphold rights, justice is truly accessible to all, and action is courageous and consistent, so that every woman and every girl may live in safety, dignity, and hope."

– CCA News

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

Access to justice for women A key to peace and reconciliation

>>> Contd. from Page 1 Col. 2

violence and marginalization.

For decades in Colombia, she noted, "women have faced high levels of sexual violence or displacement and threats, turning their bodies and their homes into battlegrounds of control by armed groups." But she continued, "the harm was so widespread that women survivors and their organizations stepped forward and changed the national conversation," pushing the government to recognize gender-based violence as a weapon of war. Furthermore, she said, the testimonies of survivors led to the creation of a gender sub-commission in the peace negotiations, a development she described as "a huge milestone."

Urgent call to translate commitments into action

Judge Scarlet Bishara, the first female judge to serve in the ecclesiastical courts of the Middle Eastern churches, is a longtime women's rights advocate who works closely with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. She has conducted two studies on the impact of the war in Gaza on women, many of whom struggle to survive in tents or overcrowded shelters which lack basic necessities like clean water, food and medicine.

"Hunger affects almost every family," she said, with many mothers sacrificing their own meals so that their children can eat." The healthcare system has almost collapsed and alongside the physical injuries, she noted that "the psychological suffering is overwhelming, as women and children struggle with constant fear, grief and trauma." In these very harsh conditions, she said, "Palestinian women continue to be resilient and try to protect their children." ***– LWF News***

cheerchat

**"Peace comes from within.
Do not seek it without."**

– Siddhartha Gautama

Of 'Epic Fury', merchants of death and Minab's lament

Shibu Itty

The international community must cease being a silent audience to a genocide. There must be an immediate demand for an end to this bloodshed before the fire consumes us all. Let us pray and work for the day when nations *"shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks" (Isaiah 2:4*). True victory is not found in the silence of the grave, but in the courage to speak for the living.

As the fires of 'Operation Epic Fury' spread across the Middle East, boardrooms in the West are counting record profits. This analysis exposes how a fortnight of war has shattered the myth of regional safety, and added fuel to a global contagion of poverty. The case for just peace now before the drums of war silences the cries of the vulnerable forever.

THOUSANDS slaughtered. Hundreds of thousands grievously wounded. Four million displaced and wandering. Untold misery as hospitals collapse. Looming spectre of famine and plague. Shattered myth of financial safe-havens. Global distress.

That *in toto* is the bottom line of a pointless war— or a calculated sacrifice of the hapless on the altar of the global arms trade.

The watchman's warning

"But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any of them, they are taken away in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at the watchman's hand" (Ezekiel 33:6).

As television screens picture the sky over the Middle East in a bruised-purple hue from the exhaust of intercepted missiles, the global community stands at a crossroads.The so-called "Operation Epic Fury"—orchestrated by the US-Israel axis under the direction of President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—was sold to the world as a surgical necessity for regional order. But as we cross the 16th day of this escalation at the time of writing, the surgical mask has slipped to reveal a face of indiscriminate destruction. Perhaps this was never a quest for "stability", but a grinding machinery of death that abandoned the patient labour of diplomacy for the cruel theatre of kinetic force.

We are all watchmen, and to remain silent as the sword falls is to be complicit in the ongoing carnage.

Mr. Shibu Itty Kuttickal is a senior business journalist with over 30 years of experience. He currently serves as a senior correspondent based in India for a Turkey-based international price reporting agency, specialising in Asian markets. He also contributes regularly to ecumenical publications in India.

The inconsolable lament

While the watchmen of the world remain transfixed by the digital glow of tactical displays, they have blinded themselves to the blood and bone on the ground. The world may now debate the shifting boundaries of "acceptable" warfare, but Gaza had already become a geography of total ruin. And, in this latest fortnight of mindless fury, it has descended into a darkness that transcends the physical lack of electricity. Modern munitions now level city blocks with a terrifying efficiency that makes the "safe zones" of yesterday a cruel joke.

In the skeletal remains of Gaza's medical centres, the "cry of Ramah" echoes through blood-slicked corridors.*"A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more" (Matthew 2:18).*

To witness Gaza today is to see the image of God systematically dismantled. When deaths are dismissed as"incidental", they are resurrecting the ghost of Herod. They claim to preserve their kingdoms by sacrificing the guiltless, forgetting that a throne built on the bodies of children is a throne already fallen.

The massacre in Minab

The lament of Rachel finds a twin echo in Minab, Southern Iran. On March 13, a missile strike on a girls' primary school turned a place of learning into a morgue. As many as 60 children, their lives barely begun, were extinguished in an instant. When blood soaks into schoolbooks and tattered uniforms, "collateral damage" becomes more than a technical term; it becomes a blasphemy against the Creator.

The Middle East, the cradle of our shared faith, was promised to flow with milk and honey. Today, it drinks the blood of the vulnerable. Military briefings boast of "decimation", but a mother's heart

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A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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